

*Please read the attached report from FEMA about firefighter fatalities in 2004. It tells me the fire service has a long way to go in training before we are instilling the right attitudes about safety and physical fitness in our firefighters.*

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## **FIREFIGHTER FATALITY FIGURES SHOW 107 ON-DUTY DEATHS IN 2004**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Despite continued advances in firefighting equipment, Incident Command System training, operations and safety training and improved communications, 107 firefighters died in the line of duty in the United States in 2004. This according to figures released today by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"This nation's firefighters lost in the line of duty, is heartbreakingly real, directly impacting their communities, their fire departments and firefighters - and especially the families they leave behind," said Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response. "As President Bush has noted, these men and women are sacrificing daily for the security and safety of their communities. We, as a nation, mourn the loss of these firefighters serving their fellow residents."

In addition to the 107 firefighter deaths that occurred in association with incidents that took place in 2004, the USFA has learned of an additional firefighter fatality in 2003 and a firefighter death in 2004 as the result

of an incident in 2002. These fatality statistics for 2004 are provisional and subject to change as the USFA contacts State Fire Marshals to verify the names of firefighters reported to have died on-duty during 2004. The final annual firefighter fatality report for 2004 is expected to be available by early June.

"Firefighters continue to give their lives while serving their communities. In 2004, a number of individuals and organizations came together to start the Line of Duty Death prevention initiatives. I look forward to working with the entire fire service and stakeholder organizations, in making sure the 16 initiatives become a part of every department," said Paulison. "We as a fire service must come together and take those actions necessary to ensure....Everyone Goes Home....after every call."

There were a total of 104 incidents that took the life of a firefighter in 2004:

- \* Career firefighters, those who are employed full-time as firefighters, comprised 29 deaths (27%) in 2004.
- \* Volunteer, seasonal, and part-time firefighters accounted for 78 deaths.
- \* Half of the firefighters that died in 2004 died from traumatic injuries such as asphyxiation, burns, drowning, vehicle crashes, and other physical injuries.
- \* The balance of firefighter deaths in 2004 were attributed to non-traumatic injuries, such as heart attacks and strokes. Heart attacks caused the deaths of 49 on-duty firefighters.
- \* Nine (9) firefighters died in 2004 in response to wildland fires (grass, trees, brush). This is the lowest level of wildland-related firefighter deaths since 1996 and represents a significant drop from the 29 wildland-related firefighter deaths that occurred in 2003.
- \* Three (3) firefighters were killed when fire apparatus were backed over them.
- \* A Pennsylvania incident occurred at the fire station and was not associated with an emergency response.
- \* Five (5) firefighters were killed when they were struck by passing vehicles at the scene of an emergency.
- \* Additionally, four (4) firefighters were killed in falls from fire department vehicles.
- \* A Massachusetts firefighter died when he fell from a responding engine company, this department also suffered a fatal fall injury involving fire apparatus in 1984.

- \* A Kentucky firefighter was shot and killed as she approached an emergency that involved domestic violence.
- \* Twenty firefighters died in vehicle collisions.
- \* Seven (7) of these deaths involved the crash of the firefighter's personal vehicle.
- \* Three (3) firefighters died in aircraft crashes; one (1) in a medical helicopter and two (2) wildland fire fighting aircraft.
- \* Five (5) firefighters died in crashes that involved responding fire apparatus.
- \* Firefighter deaths took place in 40 states. Pennsylvania had the highest number of deaths with 17 firefighters killed; Kentucky suffered seven (7) deaths, followed by California, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey with five (5) deaths each.
- \* The average age of firefighters killed while on-duty in 2004 was 47. The average age of a firefighter that died of a heart attack or stroke was 52; the average age of firefighters who died of traumatic injuries was 42.

For additional information on firefighter fatalities, including the annual fatality reports from 1986 through 2003 and the Firefighter Fatality Retrospective Study 1990-2000, please visit the USFA website at <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/fatalities/statistics/>